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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0609  
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY 0018  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0397  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0965  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0828  
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA PRIORITY 0541  
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO PRIORITY 0240  
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 0571  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0211  
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB PRIORITY 0288  
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AF, PK, FR  
SUBJECT: FRENCH GAERC PREVIEW: MIDDLE EAST, BALKANS, CUBA,  
AFPAK, AND MORE

Classified By: Andrew Young, Political Counselor, for Reasons 1.4(b), (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: On June 12, French MFA Deputy Chief for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Mathieu Carmona previewed the June General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). Themes to be discussed at next week's GAERC include Cuba, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and the Western Balkans, with a separate discussion by foreign ministers on June 18 of Afghanistan and Pakistan next steps. Carmona noted a high level of convergence with U.S. views on most issues. However, he acknowledged during the course of the meeting that France stands by its policy of "flexibility" on a Palestinian unity government and supports moving forward on the EU-Syria Association Agreement without requiring further concrete progress in Syrian behavior. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Cuba: Member states will assess Cuba's progress after a year of EU engagement. Carmona expressed disappointment at the lack of improvement in the human rights situation and said the EU's efforts have not produced many results. However, both because the EU feels engagement is the only long-term means of encouraging change in Cuba and to avoid pulling away just as the United States has begun pursuing a more open policy towards Havana, the EU will maintain its stance. Carmona stressed the participants will agree on a text that makes clear Cuba's need to address human rights.

13. (C) Israel/Palestine: Participants will discuss what Carmona described as a process of change in the region that began with the fighting in Gaza in December 2008 and has continued with the Israeli elections, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's meeting with President Obama, Obama's speech in Cairo, and Netanyahu's expected address on June 14. Ministers will issue an extensive conclusion including "all the normal points," such as support for a two-state solution, Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, and an end to settlement activity. Participants will also discuss the possibility of working with a Palestinian unity government inclusive of Hamas, a point on which member states disagree. France's view is that requiring all ministers of a unity government to subscribe to the Quartet principles would impede progress towards peace negotiations, though Carmona added France has no plans to change its position that Hamas is a terrorist organization. The meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council on the sidelines of the GAERC will

highlight existing EU-Israel relations, especially in terms of economic links. However, France feels the EU is not yet ready to upgrade political relations with Israel given continued settlement activity.

¶4. (C) Syria and Lebanon: The GAERC will issue a conclusion congratulating Lebanon on the June 7 parliamentary election and encouraging continued democratic progress. Ministers will discuss what Carmona described as a positive trend in Syria's behavior recently, citing specifically the opening of the Syrian embassy in Beirut, a lack of overt meddling in the Lebanese elections, engagement with Israel, and restricting the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq. Syria is opening to the West and re-integrating into the Arab world, a process that the EU can encourage by signing the EU-Syria Association Agreement as soon as possible, perhaps in July. When asked whether the EU would be considering other criteria for moving ahead with the agreement, such as increased cooperation with the IAEA on non-proliferation concerns, Carmona replied France sees ongoing engagement with Syria as embodied by the Association Agreement as the most effective means of encouraging further progress.

¶5. (C) The Balkans: A lunch discussion will feature a presentation by Serge Brammertz, the Prosecutor General of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, assessing the cooperation of all former Yugoslav states with the Tribunal. Brammertz's previous descriptions of Serbia's cooperation have been "nuanced," according to Carmona, and he expects that outstanding warrants and resultant Dutch opposition will make it difficult for other member states to make significant headway on Serbia's EU

integration. Ministers may decide to relax the visa regime to reward reforms by Serbian authorities and encourage more. On Bosnia, Carmona alluded to U.S. views on the necessity of a strong EU Special Representative (EUSR) when the time comes to close the Office of the High Representative. To that end, participants will discuss exactly what powers the EUSR should have. Carmona also expects a report from EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn describing the ongoing failure of the Commission to dissociate the Croatia/Slovenia border dispute from Croatia's EU accession process.

¶6. (C) Georgia: Carmona said that though Georgia is one of the most critical EU foreign policy issues, it will not be a topic for discussion at the GAERC. France agrees that the EU should wait until negotiations at the UN are complete before considering next steps, especially as extending the EU Monitoring Mission will depend in part on the fate of UNOMIG.

¶7. (C) Afghanistan/Pakistan: Carmona had few details on AfPak issues, but said as part of preparations for a comprehensive AfPak plan, foreign ministers will discuss the subject at a June 18 dinner during the European Council meeting, following the first EU-Pakistan Summit to be held on June 17. Due to a divergence in priorities between the two sides - Carmona predicted Pakistan would try to gain EU concessions on textile tariffs, while the EU would focus on security - he indicated that concrete progress was unlikely. On Afghanistan, the ministers will evaluate existing financial engagements, as well as the election observer mission and EUPOL's role in improving law enforcement.

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